

The West End Herald

Second Presbyterian Church, Greenville, SC



Are All People GOD'S CHILDREN

by Robert M. Godfrey

God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life” was a popular evangelistic catchphrase for many years. The statement’s goal was to welcome all people to hear the good news. The statement ultimately communicated a universalist message, however, and failed to capture the true message of the gospel.

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I once heard the story of an evangelist speaking these words to a man who drank from a six-pack of beer on the beach. After hearing that opening statement, the man simply replied, “Sounds great,” and immediately opened another can of beer. Doesn’t the man’s response make sense? His response showed that if God already loved him, then there was nothing else that he needed to hear or do. The lack of clarity had led to confusion.

We need clarity when we consider the fatherly love of God. Zacharias Ursinus made this point in his commentary on question and answer 26 of the Heidelberg Catechism, regarding the opening statement of the Apostles’ Creed (“I believe in God the Father, Almighty”). He pointed out that the name of the Father has three distinct meanings: first, regarding Christ as His only begotten Son; second, regarding all creatures as the Creator; and third, regarding His elect and adopted children. Ursinus’ second and third points precisely distinguish between the Father’s providential love for all people as His creatures and the Father’s redemptive love for His chosen children. We will consider these two concepts to understand what the Father’s love can mean to us.

All People as Offspring of the Creator

Scripture points us to God’s providential fatherhood over all mankind in a few key passages. In Luke 3, not only do we see that Christ’s genealogy goes all the way back to Adam, but in verse 38 we are even told that Adam was “the son of God.” Furthermore, Isaiah would call to the Lord, saying, “You are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand” (Isa. 64:8). These passages give insight that God has a fatherly role over all humanity. Yet the best passage to consider regarding God’s fatherhood over all His creatures comes in Paul’s apologetic in Acts 17.



Paul approached the Greek philosophers in Athens by quoting their own poetic words. In Acts 17:28–29, he declares:

“In him we live and move and have our being’;
as even some of your own poets have said,
‘For we are indeed his offspring.’

Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone.”

Paul used the Greeks’ poetry to point toward the powerful Father of all offspring, the Father of all creation. Paul used their poetry to stand against

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METANOIA

Prison Ministry

Metanoia Prison Ministries' Discipleship Correspondence Ministry is a one-on-one discipleship program connecting local church members with inmates who want to grow in their knowledge and love of Christ.

How It Works

- ◆ **Enrollment:** Inmates enroll in Metanoia's discipleship curriculum, which progresses from basic to advanced biblical study in the Reformed tradition.
- ◆ **Matching:** Once enrolled, inmates are paired with trained Christians on the outside who commit to walking alongside them in their spiritual journey.
- ◆ **Partnership:** Correspondence partners grade lessons and write encouraging letters, helping inmates stay on track and motivated.
- ◆ **Confidentiality:** All mail is handled through Metanoia's home office, ensuring privacy and secure communication.

Purpose and Impact

The ministry aims to:

- ◆ Proclaim Christ and disciple prisoners.
- ◆ Equip churches to minister to prisoners and their families.
- ◆ Support reintegration through faith-based growth.

Since 2012, the program has reached over 1,300 prisoners annually and involves more than 500 unique volunteers from reformed churches. Please contact Rev. Brendon Branigin or Bill Watkins for more information or to sign up! ◆



A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions

The prayers in this book are drawn from the largely forgotten deposit of Puritan spiritual exercises, meditations, and aspirations. They testify to the richness and colour of evangelical thought and language that animated vital piety in an important stream of English religious life. ~ Arthur Bennett

O Thou Giving God,

My heart is drawn out in thankfulness to thee,
for thy amazing grace and condescension to me
in influences and assistances of thy Spirit,
for special help in prayer,
for the sweetness of Christian service,
for the thoughts of arriving in heaven,
for always sending me needful supplies,
for raising me to new life when I am like one dead.

I want not the favour of man to lean upon
for thy favour is infinitely better.

Thou art eternal wisdom in dispensations towards me;
and it matters not when, nor where, nor how
I serve thee,
nor what trials I am exercised with,
if I might but be prepared for thy work and will.

THE VALLEY OF VISION



at the corner of

*River &
Rhett*



Sunday, August 9

**Farewell Reception for Jeff & Bethany Early / family
After the Evening Service in the Gymnasium
Please bring finger foods to share!**

Saturday, August 15

**Groundbreaking Ceremony for *A Time to Build*
Church Parking Lot at 10:00 A.M.**



- 2 WILLIAM FULTZ**
- 3 LOTTIE GAMBLE, DEBORAH LICHTENFELT**
- 4 MEADOW OLIVA, FITZ PRESTON**
- 5 JAN CHAPMAN, BARBARA CROSS,
CHRISTIAN TRAUTNER**
- 6 T.C. KINNEAR, ANDY SENN, IRENE SIEMEN**
- 7 SUSAN ELLER, KENNY SAFFORD**
- 8 LONDA SCOTT, JOSH UHALL**

This Week

MORNING SERMON

Dr. Alexander S. Campbell

BUILD YOURSELF UP

Jude 17-25

EVENING SERMON

Mr. Joshua D. Lyon

AN EMPTY RETURN TO BETHLEHEM

Ruth 1:7-22

Sunday, August 2

8:30 A.M.	MORNING WORSHIP
9:55 A.M.	Children's Chapel (<i>Sanctuary</i>)
10:00 A.M.	Children/Youth Sunday School
10:00 A.M.	All-Adult Sunday School (<i>Gym</i>)
11:00 A.M.	MORNING WORSHIP
5:00 P.M.	Finance Committee (<i>Conference Room</i>)
5:30 P.M.	Season of Prayer (<i>Chapel</i>)
6:00 P.M.	EVENING WORSHIP

Monday, August 3

6:30 A.M.	Men's Bible Study (<i>Fellowship Hall</i>)
6:00 P.M.	Diaconate Meeting

Wednesday, August 5

5:00 P.M.	Pastoral Care Committee (<i>Church Office Work Room</i>)
5:15 P.M.	WIC Council (<i>Conference Room</i>)
5:30 P.M.	FAMILY NIGHT FELLOWSHIP SUPPER (<i>Gym</i>)
6:30 P.M.	Summer Children's Choir Hymn Sing (<i>Sanctuary</i>)
6:45 P.M.	Ministry Moment (<i>Sanctuary</i>)
7:00 P.M.	Jr. & Sr. High Bible Studies
7:00 P.M.	Adult Prayer Meeting & Bible Study (<i>Sanctuary</i>)

Thursday, August 6

6:30 P.M.	Mission to Main (<i>Conference Room</i>)
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Friday, August 7

12:00 P.M.	Men's Luncheon/Bible Study (<i>Gym</i>)
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Upcoming Events

spcgreenville.org/calendar

August 3	Diaconate Meeting
August 9	Farewell Reception for Jeff Early Family
August 10	Session Meeting
August 15	Groundbreaking Ceremony
August 16	Rally Day / WIC Annual Meeting
August 16	Communion in the Evening Service
August 23	Adult Sunday School Communities Resume Fall Membership Class Begins

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their philosophers who taught either that God is united to all other matter (the Stoics) or that God is completely disconnected from the world (the Epicureans).

Furthermore, Paul used Greek poetry to call out the absurdity of their idolatry. As their poets had pointed to the power of one creator who controls all things, Paul called them to realize their need to know the identity of the one true God. Paul reminded the Athenians that all mankind is left without excuse in denying the Father of all people by turning toward idols of gold, silver, or stone. The Father reveals Himself through His creation and His providential hand. As Paul clearly explained to the Romans:

His invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Rom. 1:20)

Paul's words to the Romans and Athenians are still words for all mankind to hear today. Despite sinful mankind's desire to ignore God, deny Him, or outright disprove Him, the general revelation of the heavenly Father continues to leave mankind without excuse. As scientists continue to examine creation, intelligent design is verified. The events in life continue to point us to the providential Father who created and cares for all mankind.

**The Father's
salvific love
extends
beyond time,
adopts us as
His own, and
comes from
a promise
that cannot
be broken.**

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Announcements

Raising Up Mothers (RUM)

The RUM Friday morning Bible Study begins on September 11. Register on the church website: spcgreenville.org/signup.

Evangelism Explosion

Are you prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you? Join Ruling Elder Ken Safford for a 7-week Evangelism Training beginning Tuesday, September 1, at 6:00 P.M. in the Conference Room. This practical training will equip you to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ with friends, relatives, coworkers, and neighbors. Register by August 31 at spcgreenville.org/signup. Contact Rev. Brendon Branigin for questions or additional details.

Rally Day / WIC Annual Meeting

Adults and children (except Nursery and 2-year-olds) will meet in the Sanctuary on August 16 at 10:00 A.M. Children will be promoted to their new Sunday School classes, women will remain in the Sanctuary for the Annual WIC Meeting, and men will meet in the Gym for a teaching time. Adult Sunday School classes, as well as the Fall Membership Class, will resume on August 23.

Fall Membership Class

This 8-week, no-obligation class meets at 10:00 A.M. in Room C-209 beginning August 23. Scan the QR Code for more information!



Baptism Sunday

If you would like to have your child baptized, please email the church office (clarson@spcgreenville.org). The next Baptism Sunday is August 30.

New WIC (Women in the Church) Officers

President: Jenni Farr; **Historian:** Jennifer Kinnear; **Christian Growth:** Diana Sauer; **Missions:** Susan Scappatura; **Secretary:** Jenni-Lynn Babington; **Circle One Chairman:** Debra Lusk; **Circle Two Chairman:** Ellen Musco

To state that all people are offspring of the Creator may give us a degree of daily comfort, but we are given no enduring comfort. In Acts 17, Paul spoke of the Father of all humanity as an appeal to the unbeliever. He did not speak to the church with some universal claim for salvation. Paul called the men in Athens to acknowledge the God of creation that their poets had proclaimed and to know Him in full. Then Paul did not end his message with Greek poetry. He also pointed them in verses 30–31 to repentance and Christ. He told them about a righteous man who had risen from the dead. Only those who knew this Christ could truly be children of the heavenly Father. The same is true for us today.

God's People as Children of the Father

The Father's redeeming love for His adopted children is far richer than the providential care that He extends to all His created offspring. The Father's salvific love extends beyond time, adopts us as His own, and comes from a promise that cannot be broken. First, His redeeming love extends beyond all time. The Father saves His elect children, as those chosen before time began (2 Tim. 1:9). The eternal aspect of election emphasizes the greatness of God's love for His children. As Paul would proclaim to the Ephesians, "He chose [or "elected"] us . . . before the foundation of the world . . . in love" (Eph. 1:4). The eternal dwelling of God preceded the creation of time itself. Before creation began, God had already made the eternal decree of election, and Christ was appointed as the Head of the elect (see Canons of Dort 1.7). Time is surpassed by the greatness of our Father's love.



Second, the Father's redeeming love welcomes us into His family as His adopted children. Christ pointed to the truth of adoption by stating that any who belong to Him belong to His Father as well (John 14:23; 16:27). Paul explicitly described adoption by stating, "You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" (Rom. 8:15). Additionally, Paul confirmed both election and adoption by declaring that "He predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:5). In both these passages, Paul also shows us how adoption is even possible. Only after Christ cried, "Abba! Father!" could we call Him "Abba! Father!" (Matt. 27:46). Only those who belong to the only begotten Son of God can be adopted as children of the Father. The eternal and familial love of the Father is for only the children who belong to Christ Jesus.

Third and finally, the Father's love comes as a promise that cannot be broken. In our present culture, the family unit decreases as an illustration of solidity and increases as a picture of instability. We find divorce rates rising, more single-parent households, and alarming statistics on child abuse. The solid family unit continues to be under attack. Yet we can always find strength and comfort when we belong to the family of God. All who belong to the heavenly Father will not be abandoned, abused, or ignored by Him. God has made a promise that we will be His people and He will be our God (Gen. 17:7–8). His covenantal promise assures us that this family unit cannot be broken, despite our sinful efforts. When our Father looks on His children, He sees the righteousness of His only begotten Son. Christ has taken our sins on Himself, that we might be pleasant in our Father's sight. We will be His children and He will be our Father.

All who belong to the heavenly Father will not be abandoned, abused, or ignored by Him. God has made a promise that we will be His people and He will be our God.

Conclusion

All humanity may find some form of comfort by knowing that the Lord of creation providentially watches over and cares for all His creatures. Yet the only way to receive the love of the heavenly Father in full is by belonging to Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, take immense comfort if you read these words as a child of God who belongs to Christ the Savior. And if you doubt your status as one of God's children, look to Christ, believe in Him, repent of your sin, and find assurance that our heavenly Father remains faithful to all His adopted children, both now and forever. ♦

Dr. Robert M. Godfrey is pastor of Zeltenreich Reformed Church in New Holland, Pennsylvania.



Love tends to repentance; for he who truly repents of sin repents of it because it is committed against a Being whom he loves.

Jonathan Edwards